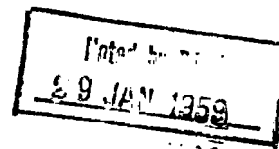


*P-41-59*  
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
WASHINGTON



January 23, 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR THE NSC PLANNING BOARD

*DD Copy*

SUBJECT: Free World Press Opinion on Middle and Far East Crises

The enclosed interim assessment of "Free World Press Opinion on Middle and Far East Crises", prepared by the U. S. Information Agency, is transmitted herewith for the information of the Planning Board in connection with the project on "Conclusions Drawn from Recent Developments in the Near East and the Taiwan Straits".

23  
Jan  
USIA

MARION W. BOGGS  
Director, Policy  
Coordinating Secretariat

*FBSD  
mm 3/2/59*  
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

December 22, 1958

UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY  
OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND INTELLIGENCE

FREE WORLD PRESS OPINION ON MIDDLE  
AND FAR EAST CRISES

AN INTERIM ASSESSMENT

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

Reactions in Western Europe, the Near East, South Asia and Africa to both the Middle and Far Eastern crises were so mixed and complex that it is extremely difficult to state categorically that the U. S. came out worse or better than the USSR and Communist China as a result of their actions in both these crises. However, based on the evidence available at this time, it would appear that, with few exceptions, articulate opinion in the countries of these areas responded more unfavorably than favorably to U. S. actions in the 1958 Middle and Far Eastern crises; Taiwan Strait action produced a more unfavorable response even than action in Iraq and Lebanon.

In the non-Communist Far East articulate opinion was generally unfavorable with respect to U. S. action in the Middle East; it was generally favorable with respect to U. S. action in the Taiwan Strait issue, an issue closer to home.

In Latin America, U. S. action in both the Middle and Far Eastern crises, while not receiving unequivocal support, nevertheless produced more favorable than unfavorable reaction. This was particularly true in the case of Iraq and Lebanon; less so in the case of the Taiwan Strait.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~FREE WORLD PRESS OPINION ON MIDDLE AND FAR EAST CRISESWESTERN EUROPEMiddle East

During most of its duration, the Middle East crisis of the summer of 1958 was a major topic of news and comment in the Western European press. Either explicit or implicit in the generally mixed editorial reaction were a number of salient factors bearing upon the specific problem of Western Europe-United States relations.

Iraq

Although startled by the unexpectedness of the Iraqi revolt, there was general agreement that it was fundamentally an expression of anti-feudal and anti-western Arab nationalism symbolized by Egyptian President Nasser rather than the consequence of Soviet machinations.

Since Iraq was the only Arab member of the western-oriented Baghdad Pact, there was similar widespread concurrence that the revolt was not only a severe setback for western policy in the Middle East but also a sharp indictment of its alleged bankruptcy -- its failure to have taken the necessary steps to adjust to the rising tide of legitimate and popularly-supported Arab nationalism.

While there was no real concern that Western Europe's access to Middle East oil would be seriously impaired -- as there had been following the abortive Anglo-French-Israeli Suez affair -- there was general agreement (except in violently anti-Nasser France) that a new and more realistic accommodation with the Middle East was imperative if it were to be kept out of the anti-west camp.

As the successor to the British and French mantles in the Middle East, the United States was criticized with varying degrees of sharpness for having pursued an essentially unrealistic and weak policy in the region so vital to the economic livelihood of Western Europe.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~Lebanon and Jordan Troop Landings

Unlike the virtual unanimity that had characterized the editorial reaction to the Iraqi revolt, the Western European press was sharply divided in its reaction to the Anglo-American decision to respond to the Lebanese and Jordanian governments' request for military assistance against alleged external aggression.

Dispite the inherent explosiveness of the situation, particularly in view of the bellicose and threatening posture assumed by the Sino-Soviet bloc, there apparently was little real fear that the Anglo-American troop landings would precipitate a war with the Soviet Union. This underlying optimism was based on the unexpressed conviction that the Soviet Union would not risk nuclear devastation over the Middle East (as seemed clear from its backdown on Syria the previous year) on the assumption that no Anglo-American invasion of Iraq was contemplated, and on the Soviet overtures for a conference on the Middle East.

With the major exceptions of France and Germany, the press tended to react to the troop landings along essentially political lines. In the main, the rightist-conservative-centrist papers, while fully cognizant of the dangers and risks involved, tended to approve them on the ground that they were necessary not only to stabilize the immediate situation in Lebanon and Jordan, but also to reassure other small countries that western promises of support were real and not hollow, as sometimes alleged. In sharp contrast, most of the (non-communist) leftist-labor-liberal papers, while conceding the legality of the Anglo-American action, tended to criticize it as a futile Metternichean response to the stirrings of legitimate Arab nationalism -- particularly, as an accommodation with it could not be escaped -- and as a unilateral aggravation of world tension (which, incidentally, put the West at a distinct propaganda disadvantage vis-a-vis the Soviet Union) since it had not been approved in advance by the United Nations which already had the matter under cognizance.

In France, the widespread conviction that Nasser was at the root of France's troubles in Algeria apparently induced all but the Communist segment of the press to approve the Anglo-American decision to help Lebanon and Jordan preserve their independence and to hail it as welcome evidence of a western return to a realistic anti-Nasser Middle East policy. In Germany, the Federal Republic's increasing economic stake in the Middle East and the nationalistic resentment over the unilateral American decision to use Germany as a staging base

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

for ferrying troops to Lebanon were apparently responsible for not only the reservations expressed by the pro-government papers, but also for the sharply critical reaction of many independent and conservative papers and the opposition Social Democratic press.

Underlying much of the French, German and Italian editorial reactions was a sensitivity to the Anglo-American bypassing of the consultative procedures of the Atlantic alliance in favor of direct bilateral action. This was particularly marked in the French press which tended to reflect De Gaulle's nationalistic resentment over an alleged Anglo-American inner circle within NATO, almost as much in the German press which was acutely conscious that the Federal Republic had not been consulted about the decision to use Germany as a staging base, and least of all in Italy. While the Italian press was eventually mollified by official assurances that no slight had been intended and the West German press by Secretary Dulles' special visit to Bonn to consult with Chancellor Adenauer, no similar development seems to have occurred in the case of the French press. And throughout all of the Western European press, even among those papers which supported the troop landings, there was recognition of the anomalous fact that by bypassing the United Nations the United States had done the very thing that it had sharply condemned its British and French allies for two years before.

Despite the above diversity of reaction there was virtually unanimous concern over whether and when the situation in the Middle East could be sufficiently stabilized so as to permit the Anglo-American partners to extricate themselves without any substantial loss of face from an essentially untenable position.

#### Middle East Conference

As in the case of the Iraqi revolt, the fundamental reaction of the Western European press to the various proposals for a Middle East conference tended to be fairly unanimous, for most papers apparently subscribed (but with differing degrees of enthusiasm) to the Churchillian dictum that "it is better to jaw, jaw, than to fight, fight."

Despite its obvious propagandistic intent, the Soviet proposal for a "summit" Middle East conference was generally welcomed (even though many reservations were voiced as to its particulars), for it was widely interpreted as a tacit admission that there would be no Soviet military intervention in the Middle East. The British counterproposal for a special

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

United Nations heads-of-government conference received an even more favorable reception (except in prestige conscious France) because it was regarded as embodying a firm western decision not to undermine the prestige of the United Nations as a force for world peace. And this generally favorable attitude towards a conference was not appreciably shaken by the Soviet Union's qualified acceptance. For, despite the realization that the Soviet Union was intent on making the most propaganda capital possible from its well-publicized role as the defender of Arab nationalism against western colonialism, there was general agreement that the West has no alternative but to accept the Soviet conditions. Much could nevertheless be salvaged, it was widely felt, if the West could devise a plan which, while safeguarding its vital interests in the Middle East, would still be acceptable to modern Arab nationalism. The surprising last minute Soviet rejection of such a conference, seemingly at the behest of Communist China, evoked sharp criticism coupled with consternation at this unexpected turn of events.

Throughout these involved negotiations for a Middle East conference there was a strong undercurrent of criticism, particularly in the British press, of the alleged American reluctance to sit down with the Soviet Union -- a reflection of the widely held view that American foreign policy tended to be too moralistic, too rigid and too unrealistic, particularly with regard to negotiations with the Soviet Union.

#### The United Nations Assembly Debate

Despite the widespread feeling that the West would suffer a serious propaganda reverse if the Anglo-American troop landings were not finally "legitimized" by the United Nations, the initial reaction of most of the Western European press to the western decision (following the Soviet veto of a conference) to seek a resolution in the United Nations General Assembly was not favorable -- largely because of the prevalent conviction that a debate in the Assembly was more likely to provide an occasion for propaganda than to result in an acceptable resolution of the crisis.

This initial pessimistic reaction, however, was largely (but not entirely) dissipated by President Eisenhower's Middle East proposals. For, despite some criticism of the overall approach and of particular measures, they were widely interpreted as a realistic, though somewhat belated, western recognition of the strength of Arab nationalism and a concomitant desire to come to terms with it on a basis of mutual amicability.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Nevertheless, the Assembly's delay in following up these proposals with a solution acceptable to all re-induced a note of pessimism which was not wholly allayed by the unexpected Arab "peace formula" which ended the immediate crisis. For there was general agreement that, while it enabled the beleaguered Anglo-American partners to withdraw from an embarrassing and dangerous situation without too much loss of face, it had not resolved the fundamental Middle East problem -- the conditions that had given rise to the crisis in the first instance. There was a vague suspicion too, that when all was said and done, the whole episode had resulted in more of a victory for Khrushchev and Nasser than for Eisenhower and Macmillan.

### Far East

For most of its duration the Far Eastern crisis of the fall of 1958 was a major topic of news and comment in the Western European press. Even more so than in the case of the earlier Middle East crisis, the opinions expressed in the rather strong editorial reaction throw a revealing light on a continuing irritant in Western Europe's normally close relations with the United States.

This irritant arises from the Western European view of what constitutes political reality. While the primacy of the American interest in and concern with the Far East has always been clearly recognized by the Western European press, its reactions to developments in this area have been influenced by two fundamental considerations. First, strong disapproval of what is generally regarded as the unrealistic American policy of supporting Nationalist China as the legitimate government of all China despite the viability of the Communist regime on the mainland.-- a policy, it is contended, which has given rise to the unrealistic American refusal to face up to the fact of international life that Communist China cannot forever be denied diplomatic recognition and membership in the United Nations. Second, the even stronger feeling that nuclear war must not be lightly risked, particularly so in the pursuit of objectives which are not central to the continuing survival of the West in a world which is polarized between the United States and the Soviet Union.

In light of the above considerations and mindful of how close (in its opinion) the world had come to war over a similar crisis in 1954-55, the Western European press revealed a deep and serious concern over the developing Quemoy-Matsu crisis in the fall of 1958. Although fundamentally of the

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~



~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

view that neither Communist China nor the United States desired war -- it was generally felt that Communist China had precipitated the crisis to compel international recognition of its status as a major world power and its right to be consulted on all major issues and that the United States would be additionally restrained by its recognition of how unpopular such a war would be with its allies -- the press tended to be more than normally fearful that the adamancy of the two belligerents might inadvertently spark a nuclear war which would inevitably involve Communist China's Soviet ally and America's Western European allies. This fear was not entirely allayed by the eventual resumption of Sino-American "peace" talks in Warsaw.

The burden of the voluminous and strong editorials can be conveniently summarized as follows:

First, while there can be no doubt that Communist China had deliberately precipitated the crisis for reasons of its own, the United States cannot be absolved of the responsibility for having permitted a situation to develop which had enabled Communist China to do so. The basic American policy of continuing to regard the rump Taipei administration as the only legitimate government of all China despite the obvious existence of a viable government on the mainland, it was contended, was tantamount to a boycott which no nation, let alone a face conscious Communist China, could be expected to accept without a struggle. More immediately, the argument continued, in view of the 1954-55 offshore islands crisis the decision to permit Nationalist China to fortify the essentially indefensible Quemoy and Matsu islands and to station so large a proportion of its best armed forces on them was a deliberate -- and foolish -- provocation which Communist China could not be expected to ignore indefinitely.

Second, while the United States is obligated to defend the island of Formosa against a Communist attack and must honor its commitment even if unsupported by its allies, it would be unwise, it was generally agreed, to consider that this obligation encompassed the offshore islands as well, since they could only be defended against a fullscale invasion by a counter-attack upon the Chinese mainland. For such a step, it was contended, would not only be sharply disapproved of by America's allies but would inevitably precipitate a war which might involve them all. The argument that the West must not permit Communist aggrandizement through the threat of force was a sound and logical one, but its application to the islands off the Chinese mainland, it was contended, seemed particularly dubious in view of the fact that they rightfully belonged to Communist China -- just as much as Staten Island did to the United States, some papers suggested.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Third, while the Sino-American agreement to resume ambassadorial "peace" talks in Warsaw was widely regarded as indicative of a more conciliatory attitude on the part of the two protagonists and of the strength of their desire to avoid war if at all possible, a final resolution of the Far Eastern problem, it was felt, was unlikely in view of the apparent reluctance of both parties to make the necessary concessions to each other -- a serious mistake in the opinion of most papers which held that there could be no real world peace so long as the Far East situation remained unresolved. In this connection, there was widespread approval of what were commonly regarded as incipient signs of an imminent change in the direction of American Far Eastern policy and sharp criticism of Nationalist China's apparent refusal to accept any change which, in the opinion of the Western European press, might lessen the danger of a Sino-American clash.

Fourth, while initially only a very few papers were willing to support a strong United States stand in the Far East, arguing that it was in the interest of all that Communist expansion be opposed wherever it threatened, this sentiment gained increasing (although somewhat reluctant) support during the course of the crisis, particularly among the serious segment of the British and Italian press. Although it was never more than a minority view, it represented a striking difference between the 1954-55 and the 1958 reactions to the developments in the Far East.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~NEAR EAST, SOUTH ASIA AND AFRICA

Basic U. S. policies were under general attack by the countries of the Near East, South Asia and Africa during both the crisis in Lebanon and the one in the Formosa Strait. Only a few countries in the area (Turkey, Iran and Jordan) fully supported the United States on both occasions. With the development of the crises to their denouements, however, the United States picked up some support, not necessarily for its policy, but for the way in which it handled the situations within the context of its policies.

Middle East

Public reaction in the area to the landing of U. S. troops in Lebanon was generally unfavorable. Universally favorable comment in the press was observable only in Iran, Jordan and Israel at the time. Even in Turkey some opposition papers were critical of the move, while in Lebanon itself only the pro-government press gave indications of relief. The Indian press was gravely concerned about increased tension in the Middle East and the possibility of Soviet counteraction, while the press in Greece was at least mildly critical.

Following the Soviet call for a summit conference on the question, there was general agreement that some sort of international gathering was desirable, although in Turkey, for example, there was recognition that the USSR's proposal was advanced for propaganda purposes. In Lebanon, Israel, Pakistan and India there was concern over the composition of the meeting -- Lebanon and Israel desiring a voice in such a conference and Pakistan fearing that India would gain international prestige by being a participant. There was considerable question as to the type of forum, whether it should be a summit conference as proposed by Khrushchev or a UN General Assembly meeting. The ultimate decision that it would be a General Assembly meeting found ready acceptance, especially in Africa, because of African consciousness that the new states there would have a voice in Assembly debates on these important issues. President Eisenhower's speech at the United Nations and the proposals it embodied were met with outright disapproval only in the UAR and Iraq, although other Arab states, such as Jordan and Lebanon, were somewhat critical of the avoidance of the basic question, to their minds, of the presence of Israel in the Middle East. Prime Minister Nehru of India also was critical of the economic emphasis of speech, opposed the suggestion for a UN police force, and called for the withdrawal of U. S. troops, although he stated that he would "consider favorably" the suggestion that the UN observer team be reinforced.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

With the unanimous passage of the Arab resolution there was general relief that the crisis had passed, although the Turkish, Iranian, Israeli and pro-government Lebanese press questioned whether the resolution would be implemented and the UAR press questioned whether the United States would immediately withdraw its troops -- a theme that was continued until the troops had indeed all gone. Many of the Arab states viewed the passage of the Arab resolution as a victory for Arabism over the West, a Syrian paper citing it as evidence that control of the UN had passed from the imperialist camp to that of positive neutrality. In Africa particularly, the U. S. was praised for its efforts to keep the issue within the framework of the U. N.

### Far East

Public reaction to the Formosa Strait crisis in most countries of the Near East, South Asia and Africa was critical of the U. S. policy toward Communist China as unreasonable and advocated the admission of Red China to the U. N. Officials of Ghana, Tunisia and India were in agreement that the Chinese Communists could be better handled within the UN than outside it, Nehru stating that he could not see how the UN could assist in the Far East situation since the UN does not recognize the Communist Chinese.

In some countries where public opinion was critical of U. S. policy, however, there was also criticism of Communist China for the belligerent tactics it adopted. Indian papers felt that Communist China was deliberately creating a tense situation and strongly condemned its action. Greece reacted in much the same way, with criticism of China outweighing criticism of U. S. policy. In such countries there was likewise a tendency to criticize the U. S. for its obdurate refusal to give up what was considered clearly Red Chinese territory, namely, the offshore islands. But again countries such as India and Greece strongly disapproved of Communist tactics.

In the Arab states -- particularly the UAR, Iraq and Morocco -- support for Communist China was the rule and generally this support was emotional, vociferous, and propagandistic. On the other hand, Turkey and Iran considered the Communist Chinese position a "bluff" that needed to be called and fully supported the United States. Nepal and Afghanistan supported the Communist Chinese on the principle of admission into the UN and indicated at least tacit support for the tactics they were employing. Pakistan supported the U. S. officially, but press comment, especially in the more influential papers, tended to be critical of the U. S.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Certain tentative generalizations can be given on current attitudes in some of the countries toward the Middle East and Far East crises. These are more impressionistic than the result of detailed study.

Africans carry little impression of either the two crises. Nevertheless, there is a growing acceptance of Communist China among African states. In addition to the Arab state of Iraq, which exchanged diplomatic relations with Communist China immediately after the July coup, Morocco and the Sudan have done so since the Quemoy issue, and the Provisional Government of Algeria, recognized by Communist China, has expressed its "solidarity" with China's Communists.

In Lebanon itself, some of the partisans of the "rebel" forces are now willing to admit privately that perhaps the American landings were not altogether bad. There is a feeling that the presence of American troops did serve to limit the extent of the rebellion and prevent out-and-out sectarian strife. The Lebanese Christians are generally appreciative. Furthermore, the withdrawal according to schedule and the exemplary conduct of American troops have cut the ground out from under criticism at the least and at the most have produced volunteered praise. The offer of U. S. aid without any conditions improved the psychological climate. American standing in Lebanon is thought to be high at the present time.

In India the present climate is better than it was during the two crises. The Indian leadership group appears to be inclined at the present not to doubt U. S. motives through it continues to be critical of U. S. action. There is considerable question of Sino-Soviet motives and this questioning-- which undoubtedly was initiated or impelled by the Bloc's actions in the two crises -- may well have been reinforced by the Berlin dispute. It is thought that the Indians are coming to see that there is a pattern in the crises this year.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### FAR EAST

Articulate Asian opinion was directed towards the U. S. on two prolonged occasions during 1958: once when American troops were despatched to Lebanon and again when the U. S. stood firm in the face of Chinese Communist threats in the Taiwan Straits. Press and official statements during the crisis atmospheres of those times reflected a pervasive pre-occupation with the U. S. and the implications of its actions which rapidly diminished as the threat of war receded.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

During the times of crisis, Asian opinion was generally critical in terms of a pervasive apprehension that U. S. policy might set off a new war and a conviction that the U. S. was actually engaged in "interference" in the internal affairs of other countries. Sympathy for Lebanese and Arab nationalism was intense. However, as events moved on, the critical views were tempered by a mounting respect for U. S. willingness to stand by its commitments in the face of a Communist threat as well as a growing fear of Chinese Communist strength and military potential.

On balance it would appear that present Asian opinions of the U. S. have not shifted appreciably as a result of the U. S. stand during these two crises. Scattered evidence, in the form of newspaper editorials and official reactions to subsequent actions of the U. S., indicates that U. S. prestige has certainly lost nothing from these two events and indeed, may have gained from or despite them. Perhaps the most persuasive influence to support this belief is to be found in the gradually improved attitude of the Indonesian Government towards the U. S. This is not, however, to posit a necessary correlation between governmental attitudes and "public" opinion.

#### LATIN AMERICA

Based on press reactions in Latin America to both the Near East and Taiwan Strait issues during the crisis period, it appears that the U. S. came out ahead of the Soviet Union and Communist China, though the U. S. lead over them was less in the Taiwan case than in the Lebanese-Iraqi case.

Excluding the Communist press, which assumed the postures one might expect, the rest of the press, in greater or lesser degree, supported the side of the U. S. None of the non-Communist press actually sided with the Communist position, although a minority was critical of the U. S. action in both cases. However, there was a difference even here in the reaction to the two events. While the criticism of the U. S. came solely from moderately liberal or left-wing, though non-Communist papers, the volume of such criticism was considerably greater during the Taiwan crisis than during the Near East crisis.

A typically critical attitude toward the U. S. in the Middle East crisis was that the policing job could be done more appropriately and with less risk to world peace by a UN police force. A typical criticism of the U. S. in relation to the Taiwan Strait issue was that the U. S. position lacked reality because Red China represented a sixth of the world's

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

population while the Taiwan government was a synthetic regime. However, these and similar attitudes expressed by area press commentators were in a minority. In general, the press supported U. S. action, although interpretations of what these two crises really meant tended to vary, with a good-sized minority expressing the feeling that the Soviet Union and Communist China did not want war, where employing what might be called classical cold war techniques and that the U. S. should stand firm as victories in the cold war could be achieved only over a frightened and uncertain adversary.

Much of the area's press made the crises the subjects for lengthy analyses of what was involved, scolded the USSR and Communist China for their heartless exploitation of people's feelings and frequently used the crises to recall other instances of Communist pressures, threats and intransigence.

All in all, the Near Eastern crisis was taken more seriously, received more comment and news play, had its issues more clearly defined, and provoked more sympathetic comment and support for the U. S. than did the Taiwan Strait issue.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~